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Trail Apps for Your Phone

Hiking in the mountains of Bursa is one of my favorite pastimes. Since most of the mountain trails and roads are unmarked, I highly recommended a trekking or hiking app on your phone. Following a road into the mountains and returning along the same road is simple and may not need a special app. However, following that same road and trying to connect to another road or trail is more complicated. I have yet to find a printed topographical map of Bursa's mountains with marked trails and roads. Today's smart phone is the best alternative that I know. Practical note: be sure to carry an extra battery if you are going to depend on your phone.

For me the 3 biggest reasons to use a hiking app are:

1. **Discover routes and trails** - Since the trails are uploaded by users, I have found that it is wise to take them with a grain of salt. Most routes will include the creator's random wanderings off trail. For this reason, if I am trying to follow a new trail, I will often compare several user's routes (if available). Sometimes I see that there are areas where different user routes diverge. While on the trail, I discover that those points of divergence are either alternatives around a barrier or an area where the trail itself is unclear. I will look these over on my computer and try to be aware of the general route. Since GPS on phones is accurate within a few meters, if you are trying to follow an unmarked trail covered by leaves, it is easy to lose the trail. If you are following a route on the phone, it will help you keep going in the general direction until you pick it up again.
2. **Provide ability to track myself** – This gives me information about elevation and distance which can help me judge if it is time to start working my way back. Beyond this is a safety feature in that when I am walking off trail in the woods, a tracking app helps me back track if I need to return to a certain point.
3. **Follow a specific route** – Most apps allow you to follow somebody else's route. The different apps have different policies on this. *Wikiloc* requires a premium subscription in order to download a route to follow.

There are dozens of map apps and GPS trackers available for our smart phones. I have downloaded several and tried *Wikiloc*, *FatMap* and *Alltrails*. (Prices below are current as of the day of this article's publication.)

Alltrails (<https://www.alltrails.com/>) has virtually no uploaded hikes available in the Bursa area. I only mention it because it is a popular app in other countries. If you use it, I have uploaded a few of my routes in the app. It seems to only be available in English, French, German and Spanish. Its premium subscription is \$29.99/year.

FatMap (<https://fatmap.com/>) is a new app to me and so far I really like its amazing 3D views and tracking. I have been surprised to find that FatMap includes some forest service roads and a few trails that I have not seen on any other map (physical or online). Currently, FatMap is only available in English. So far (1/1/2022) there are not a lot of user uploaded routes in the Bursa area. The annual subscription is \$30 or 30 Euro depending on where your Google account is based. FatMap offers a 7 day free trial of their premium Explore service. Here is a collection of some simple hikes in the mountains near Bursa: <https://fatmap.com/guidebooks/67779/relaxed-hikes-in-bursa-turkey?fmid=em>.

Currently, **Wikiloc** (<https://www.wikiloc.com/>) is my go to "hiking in Bursa" app because of the many users and uploaded trails. This has helped me explore new areas and find connecting routes between familiar areas. Fatmap is a good supplement app because of its terrific 3D functionality and integrated roads or trails not found on other apps. *Wikiloc* offers a 14-day trial period so this could be a good time to use that. A premium subscription is 5 Euro for 3 months or 10 Euro for 12 months. *Wikiloc* also has a live tracking feature that I share with friends.